

TRENDS IN CANADIAN EDUCATION 2018-2019

Trend 1. Provinces and territories are conducting whole system reviews and reforms to their education systems

- The Ministry of Education in **Saskatchewan** is currently [consulting](#) with educators, teachers and parents to collect their feedback, which will form the basis of a provincial education plan.
- The **Manitoba** government has commissioned a [review](#), with lead consultant Avis Glaze, of Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 education and is currently inviting multiple stakeholders to provide their feedback on a wide range of topics including student learning, teaching, accountability for student learning, governance, and funding. The feedback provided will help develop recommendations, which will inform the creation of a reformed education system.
- The Ministry of Education in **Ontario** completed its largest [consultation](#) in December 2018. This consultation heard from parents, students, educators, and organizations from across Ontario. The feedback has informed the development of the Education That Works for You plan to modernize learning in the education system, starting in September 2019.
- In **Nunavut**, [amendments](#) to both the Education Act and the Inuit Language Protection Act have been proposed. Public consultations were held in Fall 2018 to gather feedback on how the education system can be built based on Inuit culture, knowledge, and practices. Following consultation, the Department of Education is submitting draft legislation to the Legislative Assembly in Spring 2019. A main objective of the proposal is to establish a bilingual education system where students are fluent in both Inuktitut and either English or French.
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in **New Brunswick**, recently announced that a [review](#) of the education system will be conducted. The provincial government will be hosting a summit to bring together both French and English educators to provide input and ideas on what needs to change.

In Focus: Nova Scotia

In 2018, the [Raise the Bar](#) report was released outlining recommendations for a coherent and responsive administrative education system. Consultations were conducted with multiple stakeholders via in-person meetings and online surveys. The report proposed 6 catalysts for change:

- 1. Organize the system to focus on student learning and achievement:** Seven elected English school boards were dissolved as of March 31, 2018. \$2.3 million in annual board member stipends and expenses will go back into schools. Superintendents are now referred to as Regional Executive Directors.
- 2. Concentrate needed resources into classrooms and schools:** Give teachers and principals access to funding and responsibility for the selection of textbooks and learning materials to best support their teaching.
- 3. Make the system better for teachers and principals:** Remove principals and vice-principals from the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NTSU) and redirect them into a new professional association.
- 4. Increase trust, accountability, and transparency:** Create an independent Student Progress Assessment Office (SPA0) and establish an assessment division to develop high-quality student assessments, reporting directly to the public on province-wide results, and ensuring assessments are aligned with the curriculum.
- 5. Ensure equity and excellence in all schools across the province:** The Department must create new Executive Directors or similar-level positions of influence and decision-making power for African Nova Scotian Achievement and Mi'kmaw Education.
- 6. Streamline the Department's administration and operations and invest the savings in the classroom:** Any financial savings realized in carrying out these recommendations must be documented and shared publicly, with all savings feeding directly into schools.

Trend 2. Minority language revitalization in education has become a national priority

- **Canadian Francophone** communities have raised concerns due to the declining percentage of Francophones in communities outside of Quebec. In addition, Canadians of all backgrounds reported a need for greater promotion of bilingualism, including tools to learn a second language at any age. The Government of Canada released an [Action Plan for Official Languages](#). The action plan will provide \$5 million over four years for the creation of a new micro-grant program that will enable Francophone minority community organizations to partner with local minority schools to lead community school projects. Over 600 Francophone minority schools across Canada will have access to this initiative.
- In **Nunavut**, there is currently a shortage of qualified Inuktitut-speaking teachers, impacting the delivery of education. Nunavut is committed to promoting and revitalizing Inuktitut by [amending](#) the Inuit Language Protection Act through provisions that will allow the Government of Nunavut to deliver Inuktitut instruction and by increasing the number of Inuit working in education, funding for teacher language development, and promoting an education leave program to provide training for Inuit administrative and professional positions.

In Focus: Northwest Territories

The N.W.T. Government released an [Indigenous Languages Action Plan](#) with the following goals:

- **Language Revitalization:** Aims to slow down, stop or reverse the decline of a language, as well as educate and mobilize communities. There is a need to protect and maintain the strength of Indigenous languages as a means of communication and as a connection to culture.
- **Language Access:** There is a need for all people to be able to use and benefit from high quality public services in all official languages (there are nine official Indigenous languages in the N.W.T.). The plan proposes to expand the availability of Indigenous language instruction and programs across N.W.T. schools and early childhood programs, provide professional development for language instructors, and recruit and retain Indigenous language instructors in schools.

Trend 3. Provinces are reviewing and revising standardized assessment

- The Ministry of Education in **Ontario** commissioned a [report](#) recommending changes to standardized testing across the province. Recommendations include phasing out the EQAO tests for Grade 3 and Grade 9. In addition, replacing the Grade 10 literacy test with another test that would not be a diploma requirement. However, this report is no longer publicly available and its recommendations will not be implemented under the current government, which is working with EQAO to revise assessment and evaluation models.
- In **Prince Edward Island**, an [external review](#) of the student assessment program was prepared for the Ministry of Education. The review recommended that student assessment should continue in its present format and continue with provincial assessments to all students annually near the end of the school year and at the end of each semester for semester courses.

In Focus: British Columbia/Yukon

- The Ministry of Education released [B.C. Graduation Program Policy Guide: Grades 10 to 12](#) in December 2018. Students are required to write three new mandatory graduation assessments – numeracy in Grade 10 and literacy in Grades 10 and 12, effective July 2019. The results will be reported as stand-alone items on student transcripts.
- These graduation assessments will replace course-based provincial exams and will instead evaluate essential numeracy and literacy abilities developed across many areas of learning and grades, rather than content knowledge from one particular course.
- In the **Yukon**, the new provincial numeracy and literacy assessments will be introduced starting in the 2019-20 school year. Considerations are given to Yukon's northern context and embed Yukon First Nations Ways of knowing and doing in all grades.

Trend 4. Provinces have revised curricula in the areas of health, mathematics, Indigenous, and digital education

Health and physical education curricula are providing resources and supports to include students of all sexual orientations and gender identities, while “opt-out” or “alternative delivery” policies give parents greater control over how learning expectations are met

- In **British Columbia**, [SOGI 1 2 3](#) has gained participation from all 60 school districts. B.C.'s new curriculum includes a focus on topics related to gender and self-identity. Sexual and reproductive health is specifically covered within the Physical and Health Education curriculum. An [Alternative Delivery](#) policy will be maintained to enable students and guardians to choose means other than regular classroom instruction to address learning standards in this area.
- **Ontario** released an interim Health and Physical Education curriculum that reflects the province's pre-2015 curriculum. Public feedback has called for building a new age-appropriate [curriculum](#) that includes subjects such as mental health, sexual health education, and cannabis legalization. An update on these findings will be provided in Winter 2019 and will include an opt-out policy. The interim report fueled debate with numerous school boards stating their intention to maintain the status quo, while other stakeholders have stated the need for further public consultation.
- **Quebec** made sexuality education [mandatory](#) since September 2018 for elementary and secondary students in both private and public schools. Nearly 1,200 daycare and Kindergarten students in Quebec will be offered sexual education lessons dealing with notions of sexuality and relationship equality. Quebec also put forward recommendations to support transgender and gender non-conforming and gender non-binary students.
- **Alberta's** Bill 24 [mandated](#) schools to create gay-straight alliances (GSAs) upon student request and seeks to protect students' privacy for their involvement in such groups. The United Conservative Party threatened to reverse this bill.

Maths curricula is becoming increasingly oriented towards everyday needs and workplace skills, with financial literacy a key component of secondary education attainment

- **Ontario** is [moving away](#) from “Discovery Math” with its plan to “Focus on the Fundamentals of Math” by moving “back to traditional formulas and memorization techniques.” This is, in part, a response to declining EQAO math scores, while also seeking to prepare students for everyday living and entering the workplace. New teachers will be mandated to successfully complete a math content knowledge test before seeking their teaching registration. This curriculum will impact all grade levels and will be implemented across four years.
- **Alberta's** Kindergarten to *Grade 12 Mathematics Programs of Study* plans to shift mathematics learning outcomes towards competencies as end goals, including creativity and innovation, cultural and global citizenship, and personal growth and well-being.

Education systems are moving towards integrating Indigenous perspectives and reconciliation education into all grade levels and aspects of schooling, although implementation remains a challenge

- **British Columbia** has maintained key policies and practices to [raise Indigenous student graduation rates](#), such as [Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements](#), District Aboriginal Principal positions, [Indigenous student self-identification](#), and Aboriginal Advocate/Support Worker positions. The province's [revised 2017 curriculum](#) incorporates Indigenous perspectives into all grade levels and aspects of schooling. Most recently, B.C. released a [professional standard](#) that requires teachers to commit to truth, reconciliation, and healing.
- **Alberta** created a First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Education [Directorate](#) to provide leadership and strategic direction to support the education system in closing the achievement gap. This includes Education for Reconciliation (mandatory content for all Alberta students on residential schools and treaties), FNMI student self-identification, and grants to support Indigenous language revitalization and innovative education programs.

Digital skills and citizenship education is becoming increasingly commonplace as ways to support students in using digital tools to enhance learning and participation in democratic life while avoiding technology's potential negative consequences

- In **Ontario**, a new [digital platform](#) will be phased in to modernize access to Ontario's curriculum. This will help educators, parents and students access curriculum and learning resources in a user- and mobile-friendly manner and will become increasingly interactive over time. Ontario is also updating its Provincial Code of Conduct to ban cellphone use during instructional time starting in September 2019.
- **New Brunswick** is developing [digital literacy standards](#) to allow students to protect themselves online and ensure that they are prepared for the opportunities available to graduates in the modern economy. This coincides with the province's Economic Growth Plan of being a leader in cybersecurity. The Plan also includes funding for more makerspaces to be created in schools.

In Focus: Quebec

Quebec released its Cadre de référence de la compétence numérique ([Digital Skills Reference Framework](#)), which represents an investment of \$1.2 billion over five years and aims to equip classrooms with the latest technologies in addition to reviewing teacher training. A digital file will also be implemented in order to track students during their education from Kindergarten to university, and the framework will address important issues such as false news, sexting, and social media use. The framework allows teachers and school leaders to have autonomy over the choice of digital products and pedagogies that are used in their schools and classrooms.

Trend 5. Inclusive education models to meet the needs of students with special needs are receiving greater investment, although implementation remains a challenge

- **Yukon** announced a new [early learning plan](#) that will make funds available to provide support for children with special needs (\$900,000), including children with specific behavioural problems in licensed day cares (\$210,000).
- In **Alberta**, on September 1, 2019, seclusion rooms – which are used for the involuntary confinement or isolation of a student – will be [banned](#) in Alberta. Seclusion rooms are sometimes used for students with special needs in cases where staff are not equipped to respond to behaviour challenges.

In Focus: Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's [final report](#) of the Commission on Inclusive Education consisted of public consultations and reviews into the current practice and policy of inclusive education in public schools, including implementation challenges faced by educators. A new model has emerged that is comprised of three tiers: (1) Classrooms: universal core curriculum and core instruction for all students; (2) Small groups: supplementary interventions for some students; and (3) Individuals: intensive interventions for a small percentage of students.

Trend 6. Interest and enrolment in French immersion programs are expanding, while recruitment of Francophone and French-proficient teachers remains a challenge

- **Manitoba's** [French Language Education Review](#) 2016-2017 seeks to enable students to communicate in the French language and to appreciate Francophone cultures. The Review provides a way of measuring the success of French courses by collecting data and tracking progress over time. Using this data, schools and school divisions can target initiatives where challenges have been identified in order to support students in their French language learning.
- **New Brunswick** is expanding its French language [pilot project](#) in the 2018-19 school year to improve access to French learning in rural schools by providing students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 with 30-to-40 minutes per day of extended non-immersion instruction to help them learn to speak, read, and write in French.
- **Cross-Canada**, recruiting enough teachers to meet the French immersion demand is a challenge.

In Focus: British Columbia

Following a 2016 [Supreme Court decision](#) affirming the right of B.C.'s teachers' union to determine class size and composition, there has been a teacher shortage within in-demand subject areas, especially French immersion. French immersion recruitment has taken place in Montreal, other parts of Canada, and France, Belgium and Switzerland in Europe. The Ministry has reported [great strides](#) in closing the shortage while the B.C. teachers' union has continued to push and critique for quicker progress.